



Chief Executive Women

Women leaders enabling women leaders

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Adelaide academic shows how to get more young people into STEM**

Dr Rebecca Vivian, Research Fellow for the Computer Science Education Research Group at the University of Adelaide, will head to Sydney this week to talk to leaders in business and government about getting more young people – particularly girls – interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Dr Vivian will present the results of research she conducted as part of a Barbara Cail STEM Fellowship awarded last year by the Minister for Women Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash and Chief Executive Women (CEW).

Fellowship recipients, Sarah Chapman, Head of the Science Department at Townsville State High School and Dr Vivian each spent six weeks travelling overseas, looking at how some of the world's best organisations are promoting STEM education and careers to young people.

“Australia is simply not producing enough people with STEM skills to meet growing demand. Part of the problem can be traced back to school – the number of young people choosing these subjects is low and falling.

“On top of this, participation in STEM subjects at school is much lower for girls than it is for boys.

“If Australia wants to capitalise on the economic benefits that come from having a scientific and technologically literate, diverse workforce, we need to find strategic ways to engage students in these subjects early, and maintain their participation,” said Dr Vivian.

Her research found that Australia would do well by adopting a coordinated, national approach to engaging young people in STEM, providing greater support to teachers, working more closely with industry and making sure information is tailored to young people and their families.

“The STEM ecosystem in Australia is complex, and we’ll only get traction by making sure all parts work together better.

“When it comes to girls, we need to address the negative stereotypes and perceptions, and do a much better job at demonstrating the link between these subjects and future opportunities,” Dr Vivian said.

The 2017 Barbara Cail STEM Fellow’s report of Sarah Chapman and Dr Vivian’s research, *Engaging the Future of STEM*, will be launched at an event hosted by the Commonwealth Bank and Chief Executive Women in Sydney on 30<sup>th</sup> March.

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For more information, please contact:  
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### **Background**

Chief Executive Women (CEW) was established in 1985 by eighteen influential Australian women and now represents over 420 Australian women leaders from the corporate, public service, academic and not-for-profit sectors. Through its advocacy, targeted programs and scholarships CEW works to remove the barriers to women’s progression and ensure equal opportunity for prosperity.

Barbara Cail AO was the Founding President of CEW in 1985 and has been a constant advocate for women and for STEM participation. Recipients of Barbara Cail STEM Fellowships will be known as ‘Barbara Cail Fellows’ in her honour.

CEW’s partnership with the Office for Women will help to improve equal economic participation and secure opportunities for Australian women.